

## RAT-PROOFING YOUR HOME

The first line of defense against rodents is to prevent them from entering your home. A mouse can fit through a hole the size of a dime, so it is important to take steps to keep rodents out:

1. Place hardware cloth over vents.
2. Keep all windows and doors screened or shut at all times.
3. Seal openings in the foundation or sides of the house with sheet metal or hardware cloth.
4. Plug holes with steel wool.
5. Keep floor drains and sewer pipes capped.

## CLEANING UP AFTER A RODENT INFESTATION

✓Make sure to wear gloves when cleaning up after rodents.

✓Use a plastic spray bottle with either a 10% bleach solution (1 ½ cups bleach + 1 gallon of water) or Lysol.

✓Thoroughly soak all infested surfaces with the disinfectant and allow to set for 20 minutes before wiping up.

✓After cleaning, wash your hands and arms immediately with soap and warm water.

## DISPOSAL OF DEAD RODENTS

- Wear rubber gloves.
- Thoroughly spray dead rodents and traps with disinfectant before handling.
- Triple bag the rodents and/or traps.
- If traps will be reused, soak them in a bucket of disinfectant for 20 minutes. Allow to dry before setting them out again.



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### Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department

## CONTROLLING RATS AND MICE

*Department of Environmental Health  
Vector Control Program*

DID YOU KNOW THAT A  
MOUSE CAN FIT THROUGH A  
HOLE THE SIZE OF A DIME?



Telephone 423-209-8110

## RATS AND MICE

House rats and mice live with or close to humans in homes, sheds, and garages.

*Rats and mice are considered a nuisance because of three main problems:*

1. They eat and contaminate our food supply.
2. They damage and destroy property.
3. They carry diseases.

The three nuisance rodents in Hamilton County are the Norway rat (*Rattus norvegicus*), the black rat (*Rattus rattus*), and the house mouse (*Mus musculus*).



Norway rats



Black rat



House mouse

Images courtesy of USGS



Image courtesy of NASA

## SIGNS OF AN INFESTATION

*The degree of rodent infestation can be determined by checking for the following signs:*

- Sounds—Rats are active at night, while mice are active in the daytime. Listen for squeaks, patter of feet, and climbing sounds.
- Odors—Rats give off a noticeable pungent smell. Mice give off a musky odor.
- Droppings—Both rats and mice leave numerous droppings (up to 50 per day). Fresh droppings are moist, soft, shiny, dark in color, and ¼ to ¾ inches in length.
- Gnawings—Rats and mice constantly gnaw on hard surfaces.
- Runways—Rodents frequently use the same pathway between food, water, and shelter. These pathways are often visible and with noticeable grease-marks.

*What's the difference between rats and mice?*

Mice are smaller than rats. The Norway rat is 11 to 19 inches including the tail, with the black rat slightly shorter in length. The house mouse is only 5 to 8 inches long. The black rat has larger ears than the Norway rat.

## METHODS OF CONTROL

Rodents cannot live without food, water, and shelter, so the best approach is to remove those necessities from their reach. *There are a variety of control measures as described below:*

✓Removal of Shelter—Lumber piles, trash, and empty boxes provide rodent shelters. Materials such as these should be removed or stored at least 18 inches off the floor.

✓Removal of Food and Water—Foodstuffs and pet food should be stored in rodent-proof containers. Household garbage that contains food waste should be kept in tightly covered metal or plastic cans. It is also helpful to repair leaky faucets and remove any water storage areas.

✓Traps—Rodent traps include glue boards, cage traps, and snap traps. The best place to set traps is along rodent travel routes.

✓Poisons (baits)—Rodents feed on baits and begin dying 3 to 10 days later. Place baits in or near travel ways, burrows, or nesting sites. Keep domestic animals away from the baits. Always follow manufacturers directions for use.

Placing poison bait inside a home is not recommended because of the danger posed to children and domestic animals. It is also possible that rodents that eat the bait may die inside the walls, creating odor problems. **It is best to use poison baits outside, and traps inside.**